Part 2: Admissions Regulations

Section 4: Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) regulations

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is defined as the assessment of previously acquired learning (whether certificated or experiential learning) within the context of the course on which the student is currently enrolled. The term RPL is used as a generic acronym to cover the accreditation of both experiential and certificated prior learning.

General credit and specific credit

4.1 The term **general** credit applies to the totality of credit which a student might have as a result of prior learning, and which may have been awarded by another institution.

4.2 Specific credit is awarded for learning which matches the learning outcomes of particular module(s). In addition to being awarded credit the student will be exempt from that module: **exemption** signifies that the student is considered to have completed the module for the purposes of pre-and/or co-requisite and/or core module requirements.

Note: The amount of general credit achieved or recognised elsewhere may not all be awarded as **specific** credit towards a particular award within this University. For example 120 credits awarded at a previous institution is general credit, however the University of Westminster may only award e.g. 20 specific credits when the learning is mapped against the specific course.

General RPL regulations

4.3 Students may be awarded credit for prior certificated learning (RPCL) or prior experiential learning (RPEL) at Credit Level 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 if they meet the criteria set out in Table 1 below and with the detailed regulations and procedures set out in Section 4 of the Academic regulations: RPL Regulations. RPL credit can only be awarded for whole modules, not for part of a module.

Table 1: *Recognised credit for RPCL or RPEL*

Award	**Maximum Number of RPCL or RPEL credits which may count towards the requirements of the award**	**Minimum number of credits to be achieved at the University of Westminster**
Foundation Certificate	60 credits	60 credits at L3 or above
CertHE	60 credits	60 credits at L4 or above
DipHE	160 credits	80 credits, including at least 60 credits at L5 or L6
Non-honours Degree	200 credits	100 credits, including at least 80 credits at L5 and/or L6
Honours Degree	240 credits	60 credits at L6 and 60 credits at L5 or L6
Integrated Masters	240 credits	120 credits at L7, 60 credits at L6, and 60 credits at L5 or L6
Foundation Degree	120 credits	120 credits, including at least 60 credits at L5 or above
Postgraduate Certificate	30 credits	30 credits at credit level 7
Postgraduate Diploma	60 credits	60 credits at credit level 7

Master's Degree	90 credits	90 credits at credit level 7

4.3 In all cases the credit awarded for prior learning must constitute a coherent programme of study when considered together with the credit gained for modules studied within the University scheme.

4.4 The University does not guarantee the award of any credit to any student who makes a claim. Nor does the University guarantee that any credit awarded will find acceptance in any other course or institution.

4.5 The level of the credit awarded is determined by the level of the previous study and not for the achievement of marks above the threshold.

4.6 In order to justify the award of credit, the learning must be an appropriate level of study for the award.

4.7 The award of credit will depend on the currency and relevance of prior learning as assessed by the Academic Assessor and approved by the relevant College or University Board.

4.8 Credit for prior learning must relate to named modules. If credit is awarded for a particular module, the student will, in addition to gaining credit, be exempt from that module. This means that the University treats the student as having completed the module for the purposes of pre-and/or co-requisite requirements.

4.9 The course-specific regulations will state the processes by which academic credit for prior learning will be awarded.

4.10 A student may not claim credit for prior learning in respect of a module, which they have attempted and failed.

4.11 A Professional or Accrediting Body may determine regulations governing an award which restrict the amount of RPCL, RPEL, or both, which can be awarded towards accredited programmes. Where the maximum credit permitted is less than that allowed under the University of Westminster regulations the Professional Body restrictions will override the University regulations.

Note: It is vital that Professional or Awarding Body regulations are checked prior to validation, agreed through validation and incorporated into the course handbook.

4.12 Students may choose not to use any credit, which they have been awarded.
Note: Credit cannot be awarded until the appropriate course fees have been paid. There is no additional charge for the processes of accreditation of prior learning, whether certificated or experiential, unless the RPEL process is delivered through specific modules for which a module fee is charged.

Validation

4.13 Named awards must specify within their regulations the nature of the processes adopted for the award of credit for prior learning. These processes will be considered within the validation/review process and must follow University guidelines, and specify the Admissions process, the RPL Assessment Board and/or named Assessment Board, to which recommendations on credit awarded by RPL are submitted.

Appeals

4.14 An appeal may only be submitted if the student believes there has been material irregularity in the processing of their application. All such academic appeals must be made in writing to the Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) with 10 working days of the notification to the student on the decision on the award of RPL credit.

RPCL (Recognition of Prior Certified Learning)

4.15 The Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL) is defined as the process by which appropriate certificated learning from another institution is accredited towards a University of Westminster award. The prior certification should be provided by a recognised academic institution as a result of a rigorously assessed learning experience. Credit for learning, which has been gained from an uncertificated course (or where the certificate is in respect of attendance only), should be claimed through the RPEL route.

4.16 Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning is defined as certified learning that has taken place prior to entry on to the course of study. Modules taken outside of the course during the student's registration at the University would not normally be permitted as a basis for an RPCL claim as they would not fit the definition of being **prior** certificated learning

4.17 Students may gain credit from courses which they have previously taken at what is deemed to be HE level. This may be a course which they have completed which has given them an intermediate award (e.g. a Dip HE), an award they have completed (e.g. HND), or alternatively, any part of a course which they have successfully passed, if they did not complete the award for which they were registered.

4.18 At the time of awarding credit for RPCL, a decision must be made as to whether the marks or grades, in their original or an amended form, will be included on a student's record and so count towards the final award. This would only apply to Levels 5 and 6 of an undergraduate degree or Level 7 of a postgraduate degree and in accordance with the regulations as stated in Section 17 Undergraduate Framework or Section 18 Postgraduate Framework 'Transfer of Credits'.

Note: Normally these marks would only be transferred where the student has studied in a system where a similar process of marking is used, with a rigorous quality assurance process (e.g. another UK University).

4.19 Credit towards an honours degree would normally only be awarded in respect of a sub-degree award or qualification which the student has obtained, or for a sum of credits that has not led to an award. Once an honours degree has been awarded it cannot provide credit towards another honours degree.

4.20 Credit towards a Master's degree would normally only be awarded in respect of an intermediate award or qualification already obtained, or a sum of credits that has not led to an award.

Note: If a student already has a Master's degree, any use of credit from this towards another Master's degree is considered double counting of credit. A student may "top up" credit from a Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma to a Master's, but cannot use learning, which has already contributed to one Master's degree towards another Master's degree.

4.21 Credits may not normally be used to count towards a second qualification which is both at the same level and in a similar subject to the first e.g. a student who has been awarded a BA Honours in History would not be able to count credits at levels 5 and 6 from this programme towards a second BA Honours in History and Politics.

4.22 Credit Transfer of credits to count towards a second qualification at a higher level may be allowed, as long as this does not exceed the maximum number of credits allowed by RPL For example a PG Certificate awarded previously by the University of Westminster or another UK awarding body may, if approved by the School, be counted towards a Master's degree award.

RPCL mechanisms for enrolled students

4.23 The student must provide information on their certificated learning on an RPCL application form located at https://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/current-students/your-studies/forms-and-procedures/accreditation-of-prior-certified-learning-apcl . In all cases documentary proof that

the qualification, in whole or in part, has been obtained must be provided. It is the student's responsibility to provide this documentation.

4.24 The information which must be included in an application is:

a) the title of the award/qualification previously studied by the student and the name of the institution where the certificated learning was undertaken;

b) the dates and duration of the study;

c) details about syllabuses, assessment and which components of the award were successfully completed;

d) details of the credit awarded, and the credit framework used by the awarding institution.

4.25 The academic staff member responsible for recommending the award of RPCL credit must advise the student formally that such recommendations are subject to ratification by the Progression and Award Board.

RPCL Mechanisms for advanced entry applicants to undergraduate courses

4.26 The award of credit for certificated learning will, in the case of advanced entry (normally entry to level 5 or 6), be considered by the appropriate Admission Tutor, and appropriate Admissions Officer.

4.27 Where RPCL is being considered for credit for a whole year (or two whole years') of study, the student's prior learning should be mapped against the learning outcomes of that year(s) and the learning required to progress to the next year of study. The cross mapping of individual elements of prior learning to individual modules is not considered necessary unless this is essential to the programme for which credit is claimed.

Note: When recommending entry to level 5 or 6 the Admissions Tutor should complete the appropriate checklist available from the Admissions Office.

4.28 Where an applicant is made an offer of an advanced entry place on a course on the basis of a prior certificated learning, they should complete the RPCL form and submit it to the Senior Admissions Adviser (Operations) with evidence of their prior certificated learning. The credit will be considered on the basis of evidence presented and, where the evidence supports the advanced entry of the applicant on to the degree course, the offer of a lace on that course will be confirmed as well as unconditional. Once the student has fully enrolled on the course, the award of RPCL credit must be reported to, and ratified by, the appropriate Progression and Award Board.

RPEL (Recognition of Experiential Prior Learning)

4.29 The Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) is defined as the process by which appropriate experiential learning is assessed and accredited. Experiential learning can be described as the knowledge and skills acquired through life experience, work experience and study, which are not formally attested through any educational or professional certification. It may also include instruction-based learning, provided by any institution, which has not been examined in any of the public examination systems.

4.30 It is important that your knowledge and skills are up to date and over time academic programmes develop and change. Normally the University require that prior learning has been achieved within the last five years, however if your prior learning is older than this and you have remained up to date in your subject area you may still be able to make a claim

4.31 Credit for experiential learning may be gained from a variety of sources e.g. within the workplace, from training courses, which the individual has completed but which are not certificated, through experience in voluntary work, or by individual study. The source therefore

is not important as long as the learning can be demonstrated to be at an appropriate level and in a relevant subject area. Credit once awarded is not distinguished by its source.

4.32 Claims of experiential learning may be considered for learning that has taken place since the student commenced the course at the University of Westminster. This learning will normally be work based learning. Any claim should be made prior to the start of the module for which the claim of credit is made.

4.33 RPEL credit awarded at any level is not given a mark and therefore will not be included in the calculation of the classification of the final award.

Note: The calculation of the classification will be based on the formally assessed modules the student has taken in the University, although the prior credits will be counted towards the total number of credits required for the named award.

4.34 Where the evidence relating to the claim is in a language other than English, the academic assessing the claim must possess sufficient competence in the language in question. If this is not the case then you may be requested to provide a translation into English of any evidence submitted in support of your claim.

4.35 As with any academic work, any work submitted in support of an RPEL submission that is found to contain elements of plagiarised work will be discounted. Where plagiarism is suspected in a submission from an existing student the case will be referred for investigation under Section 10 Academic Misconduct.

4.36 Where Faculties or course schemes provide an RPEL module, the module should provide the opportunity for the student to achieve credits at the designated credit level of the module, as long as the assessment criteria have been met. Students must demonstrate in assessment that there has been an adequate reflection on experience, that learning has been identified and articulated, that suitable evidence has been gathered and that an appropriate presentation has been made. The award of credits for successful completion of an RPEL module does not guarantee that any credit will be awarded for the subsequent RPEL claim, but such credit may be awarded if the student has demonstrated relevant learning at the appropriate level.

4.37 Where the RPEL Board do not approve claim, only one re-submission will be permitted where the RPEL Board have determined either the student is permitted to present further documentation in support of their application, or that the students should rewrite their submission.

RPEL mechanisms

4.38 All Faculties must designate a named staff member with responsibility for RPEL.

4.39 All students must be informed of the timescale for making an application prior to their registration.

Individual responsibilities for RPEL procedures

4.40 The student:

a) will be encouraged during the enrolment period to identify any areas of previous experience where learning has taken place;

b) will be responsible for the decision as to whether any claim will be made for this learning;

c) will describe the learning they have achieved in objective terms, by matching this against the learning outcomes for the module(s) for which they are making a claim, under the guidance of the Mentor;

d) will decide on the format in which the submission will be made, within the latitude allowed by the course regulations;

e) will be responsible for gathering supporting corroborating evidence to substantiate their claim and if this includes statements from employers it is the student's responsibility to obtain these;

f) will be responsible for submitting their claim with supporting evidence by the set date to the named person within the course team;

g) will attend an interview with the Academic Assessor, if required;

h) will be responsible for any revisions to their submission requested by either the Academic Assessor or the RPEL Assessment Board, in discussion with the Mentor.

4.41 The College mentor:

a) will normally be a member of the academic staff who teaches on the course on which the student is registered;

b) may ask that an additional member of academic staff should share the role of the Mentor, in the case of a specialised academic field which requires subject specific expertise;

c) will be responsible for helping the student to prepare the submission, for suggesting alternative methods of presentation if appropriate, and for suggesting the nature of appropriate corroborating evidence;

d) must not offer the student any guarantees about the outcome, successful or otherwise, of the student's submission.

4.42 The academic assessor (Course Leader / Module Leader):

a) will be a member of academic staff with subject expertise in the area of the submission;

b) will examine the documentation or other material which has been presented and may then interview the student; any requirement for an interview would be determined in accordance with the specific regulations for each course scheme;

c) should establish whether academic learning has taken place which matches the learning outcomes of the modules for which credit is being claimed as a result of the applicant's experience. The Academic Assessor should ensure that this is current, i.e. not learning which has since been forgotten (see 4.29 - 4.30);

d) must forward to the RPEL Assessment Board a statement detailing the number of credits at each level which the Academic Assessor is recommending for award purposes. This statement should indicate which module(s) the credits are being awarded for.

RPEL Board

4.43 RPEL claims at all levels are considered by a University RPEL Board that meets at least three times a year.

4.44 The University RPEL board is responsible for the following:

a) making the award of RPEL credit;

b) determining the level of RPEL credit;

c) determining whether the student making an RPEL claim should be required to present further documentation in support of their application, or that the students should rewrite their submission;

d) ensuring that the integrity of the academic standard of the award is observed;

e) monitoring the processes and outcomes of the award of RPEL credit;

f) making recommendations to the Faculties on any matter relating to RPEL assessment;

g) notifying the Academic Registrar's Department of any decisions and recommendations;

h) providing an annual report on the RPEL process to the Teaching Committee.

4.45 The University RPEL Board will also perform a monitoring and guidance role in relation RPCL processes. Information on the operation of RPCL across individual Faculties will form part of the Board's annual report.

4.46 The composition of the University RPEL Board shall be determined by the Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards).

4.47 The Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) is responsible for the nomination of an appropriate External Examiner.